

Overview of Prior Learning Assessment Practices at Kentucky's Colleges and Universities

In October 2008, CPE sent an electronic survey to the chief academic officers of all public four-year universities, KCTCS, and Gary Cox, President of the Association of Independent Kentucky Colleges and Universities. Dr. Cox forwarded the survey to each of his member institutions. All public universities responded to the survey. Six of the 20 AIKCU member institutions responded as did 11 community and technical colleges. The following are some highlights from the survey results.

1. *What kinds of PLA credit are accepted at Kentucky postsecondary institutions?*

Public Universities	Standardized exams	Challenge exams	ACE credit recommendations	ACE military recommendations	Local workplace training	Portfolios
Eastern Kentucky University	X	X	X	X		
Kentucky State University	X	X		X		X
Morehead State Univ.	X	X	X	X		
Murray State University	X	X		X	X	X
Northern Kentucky University		X	X	X		X
University of Kentucky	X	X		X		
University of Louisville	X	X	X	X	X	X
Western Kentucky University	X	X		X		

- All universities accept challenge exams.
- Northern Kentucky University responded that standardized exams were not accepted. However, answers to subsequent questions demonstrate that the university does accept this type of credit.
- Kentucky State University and the University of Louisville accepts all types of credit for prior learning.

Private Institutions	Standardized exams	Challenge exams	ACE credit recommendations	ACE military recommendations	Local workplace training	Portfolios
Bellarmino University	X	X				X
Brescia University	X	X				X
Kentucky Wesleyan College	X	X		X		
Midway College	X		X	X		X
Pikeville College	X	X		X		X
Union College		X	X	X		

- None of the responding private institutions evaluate local workplace training for credit.

KCTCS	Standardized exams	Challenge exams	ACE credit recommendations	ACE military recommendations	Local workplace training	Portfolios
Ashland	X	X	X	X	X	X
Elizabethtown	X	X	X	X		
Gateway	X	X	X	X	X	X
Hazard	X	X	X	X		X
Henderson	X	X	X	X		X
Hopkinsville	X	X	X	X	X	
Madisonville	X	X	X	X		X
Maysville	X	X	X	X		X
Owensboro	X	X	X	X	X	X
Somerset		X	X	X		
Southeast						X

- Ashland, Gateway, and Owensboro accept all types of credit for prior learning.
- Seven institutions accept portfolios.
- Southeast only accepts portfolios.
- All but one institution accepts challenge exams, ACE credit recommendations, and ACE military credit recommendations.

2. What types of standardized exams are accepted?

Public Universities	CLEP	DSST	Excelsior	AP	Other
Eastern Kentucky University	X	X		X	
Kentucky State University	X			X	
Morehead State Univ.	X			X	
Murray State University	X			X	
Northern Kentucky University	X			X	
University of Kentucky	X	X		X	X
University of Louisville	X		X	X	X
Western Kentucky University	X			X	

- All public universities accept CLEP and AP.
- The University of Kentucky accepts the most types of standardized exams among our public institutions.

Private Institutions	CLEP	DSST	Excelsior	AP	Other
Bellarmino University	X	X	X	X	X
Brescia University	X	X		X	
Kentucky Wesleyan College	X			X	
Midway College	X	X		X	
Pikeville College	X			X	
Union College	X			X	

- Like their public counterparts, all institutions accept CLEP and AP.
- Bellarmine University accepts all types of standardized exams.

KCTCS	CLEP	DSST	Excelsior	AP	Other
Ashland	X			X	
Elizabethtown	X	X		X	
Gateway	X			X	
Hazard	X	X	X	X	X
Henderson	X	X	X	X	
Hopkinsville	X	X		X	
Madisonville	X	X		X	X
Maysville	X				X
Owensboro	X	X		X	
Somerset	X	X	X	X	
Southeast	X			X	

- All responding KCTCS institutions accept CLEP, while all but one accept AP.
- Hazard Community & Technical College accepts all types of standardized exams.

3. Is credit for prior learning accepted throughout the institution or only in certain colleges or departments?

- All private colleges and universities, and all KCTCS institutions¹ responded that PLA is conducted campus-wide.
- Among the public universities, PLA is conducted in select colleges and departments at Murray State University, Northern Kentucky University, and the University of Louisville. PLA is accepted campus-wide at all other universities.

4. Where is information on prior learning assessment housed?

- Almost all institutions house information on prior learning assessment in multiple places.
- All but two of the public universities have information about PLA on their Web sites.
- Other than the Web site, the most popular places to house PLA information at our public universities are adult and continuing education offices and registrar's offices.
- Only one private institution puts PLA information on its Web site.
- All but two KCTCS institution house PLA information in the registrar's office. Only three KCTCS institutions have PLA information on their Web sites.

5. Do institutions place restrictions on the use of prior learning assessment?

- None of the public universities restrict credit for prior learning to lower-division courses.
- The most common restriction among all types of institutions is a cap on the number of credits that can be earned through credit for prior learning.
- Of the institutions that limit the number of credits that can be earned through PLA, there is a wide range in that credit cap.

¹ Ashland responded that PLA is accepted campus-wide, but also responded that credit for prior learning is only accepted in the Office of Continue (sic?) and Distance Education.

Public Universities	Credit Cap
Morehead State Univ.	32 hrs for bachelor 16 for associate
Murray State University	For BIS it is 45 hours
Northern Kentucky University	32 but no one ever gets that many
University of Kentucky	No more than half of the credit toward an undergraduate degree may be earned by any combination of PLA.
University of Louisville	48 hours
Private Institutions	Credit Cap
Bellarmine University	Only on CLEP and external agencies
Brescia University	36
Kentucky Wesleyan College	42 hrs
Midway College	Only what is allowed to be transferred in (86 hrs)
Pikeville College	Advanced Placement 15 hours; Work Experience 16 hours; CLEP 30 hours; Credit by Exam 15 hours
KCTCS	Credit Cap
Hazard	This varies by program area.
Maysville	15 credit hours.

6. For those institutions that accept portfolios, what types of help are available to students?

Public Universities	Advising	Handbook	Pre-screening	Credit course	Non-credit course	Seminar	Other
Kentucky State University	X		X				
Murray State University		X					
Northern Kentucky University	X		X				X
University of Louisville	X	X		X			
Private Institutions	Advising	Handbook	Pre-screening	Credit course	Non-credit course	Seminar	Other
Brescia University	X						X
Midway College	X					X	
Pikeville College	X		X				
Union College	X						
KCTCS	Advising	Handbook	Pre-screening	Credit course	Non-credit course	Seminar	Other
Ashland	X	X	X				
Gateway	X	X					
Hazard	X	X	X				
Henderson	X						
Madisonville	X	X					X
Maysville	X	X					X
Somerset		X					
Southeast	X	X					

- Individualized advising, including portfolio development, is by far the most popular type of help provided among all types of institutions.
- The next most popular type of help is a student handbook or guidebook on portfolio development.

7. Are there any data on success outcomes, such as graduation rates, of students who have utilized credit for prior learning?

- Kentucky State University and the University of Louisville are the only institutions with information on the success of students who have used credit for prior learning.

8. What are the barriers to increasing and expanding the use of prior learning assessment?

Among the public universities, the answers to this open-ended question include:

- Faculty and academic administration approval.
- A process for accepting prior learning credit beyond AP, CLEP, challenge exams, ACE and military credit needs to be approved by the faculty.
- Willingness of departments to participate.
- Academic support of specific requests is not consistent and often changes based upon stance of the departmental and college leadership regarding prior learning assessment.
- Limited knowledge by faculty and academic administrators of prior learning assessment exams/format/methodology.
- Developing faculty understanding of the various options available and encouraging them to use those options that are appropriate for their discipline.
- Nontraditional students usually consist of older people who are involved in a career or retired and are not interested in furthering their education.
- Older people do not have the resources to travel back and forth due to the economy.
- Knowledge of technology for people who are not computer literate.

At the private institutions, barriers include:

- Faculty knowledge of possibilities.
- Student failure to properly document experience.
- Faculty involvement.

Barriers at KCTCS institutions include:

- Faculty resistance.
- Cost and prep time required.
- Information exchange between the institution and the public.
- Proper training for assessment.
- Development of a formal mechanism for assessment.
- Student advising on this important endeavor.
- Understanding what it is to begin with.

9. Would faculty and staff be interested in a workshop on credit for prior learning?

- All public universities responded affirmatively.
- Three private institutions said yes, while one said no. Two did not respond to this question.
- Eight KCTCS institutions are interested in a workshop. Two institutions are not interested, and one did not respond.